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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: DARFUR STUDENTS BEATEN AND DORMITORIES DESTROYED FOLLOWING PROTESTS AT KHARTOUM UNIVERSITY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. According to eyewitnesses and participants, Sudanese security services violently broke up a Darfuri student protest at Khartoum University on June 5. Security forces beat the protestors with iron bars, threw several Molotov cocktails into the crowd, and fired handguns into the air to disperse the crowd. After breaking up the protest, the security forces then moved on to a dormitory inhabited by Darfuri students and destroyed the living space of approximately 40 of them. Contacts from SLM-Minnawi report that approximately 20 students were wounded in the clash, with three of them in critical condition. According to these sources, at least one dozen students remain in detention. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On June 6, TDRA Legal Secretary Abdel Aziz Sam and Director of Capacity Building met poloff at SLM-Minnawi headquarters in Omdurman. Dozens of young men were present at the headquarters. In one room approximately seven young men lay on the ground with bloodied bandages applied to their heads and legs. Poloff photographed the injured and will transmit images to AF/SPG and the Office of the Special Envoy.

REASON FOR THE PROTESTS

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¶3. (SBU) According to SLM-Minnawi contacts, on June 4 a leader of the Darfur Students' Association, Ismail Ahmed Salah, was harassed by a Sudanese security agent assigned to the University of Khartoum. According to these sources, Salah was sitting with a group of young women when the security agent said, "Don't sit with these women, you slave," and then struck Salah with the butt of his pistol.

PROTESTS

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¶4. (SBU) On June 5, the Darfur Students' Association organized a protest at Khartoum University at 13:30 to protest the attack on Salah. Eyewitnesses estimated that there were roughly seven or eight hundred unarmed protestors gathered at the university from different political parties and geographic origins. According to protest participants, approximately 150 security forces and NCP affiliated students approached the gathering. Most of these individuals were carrying iron bars, while others had Molotov cocktails and twenty others had handguns, these sources said. According to these sources, although the security forces were dressed in civilian clothing, the presence of firearms and the matching boots of many of the individuals, indicated that the individuals came from the state security apparatus. "They shot their guns up in the air and then stormed at us with their clubs beating anyone who was in their way," stated one eyewitness. Protestors fled, but security forces detained roughly one dozen individuals. Contacts stated that while beating many of the individuals from Darfur, the security forces made the victim state "I am a slave and I will never rule Sudan."

¶5. (SBU) Salah Ibrahim, one student with a large bloodied bandage wrapped around his head, told poloff that he was beaten and then detained by Sudanese security. He stated that he was insulted,

beaten further, and then thrown into a security vehicle en route to interrogation. Ibrahim stated that he faded in and out of consciousness while in the vehicle, alarming his captors who stated, "He might die, we better get rid of him." Ibrahim said that he was then dumped at the doorsteps of a nearby hospital, and as the car pulled away the security men yelled, "This man belongs to Khalil Ibrahim!"

DORMITORY ATTACK

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¶6. (SBU) According to these same sources, after the protest had dispersed, a larger group of plain-clothes security forces gathered outside of a student dormitory at approximately 18:00. The force was "more than 150 people" with heavier weapons, including 25 Kalashnikovs and other larger caliber weapons. According to these sources, the security forces then entered the second story of the dormitory and destroyed six rooms housing approximately 40 students, destroying the rooms and setting some of their possessions on fire. Inhabitants fled to higher levels of the building, and according to one contact, security forces threw several students off of the second and third stories of the building, resulting in severe injuries.

¶7. (SBU) TDRA Legal Secretary Abdel Aziz Sam stated that the government recognizes that Darfuri students are active, strong, and if challenged, a threat to the government. He added that the GoS currently feels pressured following the UNSC visit, the breakdown in bilateral discussions between the U.S. and Sudan, and the possibility of further indictments by the ICC. "There is a relationship between all of these major events and even events like this," stated Sam. Sam stated that his most immediate concern is finding treatment and refuge for the wounded staying at SLM-MM

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headquarters. "These young students are wounded and Zaghawa, and if they go home or go to the university everyone will think they were part of the JEM attack," stated Sam.

¶8. (SBU) On June 5, the moderate Arabic daily "Al-Sudani" provided front-page coverage of the protest and the GoS's response. "Al-Sudani" stated that "more than fifteen students were injured in the clash between NCP students and SLM students affiliated to Abdul Wahid Al-Nur." The article also states that the NCP students released a statement on the event, stating that four of their students were injured in the events. Reacting to the column, Abdel Aziz Sam commented, "This is just propaganda - the Government wants to discredit this and say it is tied to Abdul Wahid and Israel."

COMMENT

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¶9. (SBU) In the last six months there have been at least three other protests by Darfuri students at Khartoum's universities. However, SLM-Minnawi observers agreed that this was the largest, most organized, and most violent Darfuri student protest to occur in ¶2008. Abdel Aziz Sam also is correct to tie it to other events. As the GoS feels more pressure from within and without Sudan, it will likely take out its frustrations on its usual targets.

DATTA